



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: MARCH 24, 2020

ITEM NUMBER: 5

SUBJECT: COVID-19 EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

DATE: MARCH 23, 2020

FROM: CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

PRESENTATION BY: LORI ANN FARRELL HARRISON, CITY MANAGER

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: LORI ANN FARRELL HARRISON
714-754-5328**

RECOMMENDATION:

Consider whether to direct the City Manager and City Attorney to create an Emergency Rental Assistance Program to provide homelessness prevention funds to assist renters within the City of Costa Mesa affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Appropriate \$250,000 from the City's General Fund and/or any State and/or Federal Disaster Relief funds and create a grant program to assist low income and vulnerable renters within the City of Costa Mesa.

BACKGROUND:

Eligible households will receive direct financial assistance of up to \$1,500/month. Financial awards will be pro-rated based on the percentage of Applicant Household leaseholders who can document COVID-19 income impacts, as defined. An application may be submitted by an Applicant Household once per month during the duration of the County's Public Health Departments Emergency Order, provided the economic impacts for the Applicant Household are ongoing. All applicants will be referred to other basic services and assistance programs, including unemployment insurance, nutrition assistance, general cash assistance programs, mental and behavioral health assistance, and others.

ANALYSIS:

Due to existing and anticipated temporary reductions to household incomes related to the COVID-19 crisis, the City Council may consider creating an Emergency Rental Assistance Program that would assist low-income and vulnerable renters within the City of Costa Mesa. The City Council may appropriate \$250,000 from the General Fund and/or utilize any State and Federal Disaster Relief funding the City may receive.

Applicant Household lease holders would be required to provide verification of COVID-19 income impacts and meet the City's eligibility criteria.

Eligibility

- Applicant Households must be an "Affected Residential Tenant" residing within Costa Mesa, as defined in Costa Mesa's "COVID-19 Emergency Residential Moratorium Urgency Ordinance" adopted on (insert date).
- Applications must be submitted by a household member who is a signed tenant to a current, written lease for a Residential Unit within the City of Costa Mesa.
- Applicant Households must document a loss of household income related to COVID-19 impacts. This may include evidence that employment was suspended or terminated, that applicant could not go to available work because of school closure/loss of childcare or could not work because of a coronavirus-related illness.
- Applicant Household income must be at a low or very low income level of housing affordability.
- Multiple eligible members of the same household may apply jointly for assistance.
- Maximum one application per household.

Implementation

City staff could administer the program or the City can contract a provider with the capacity to administer the program and provide homelessness prevention assistance in the form of financial aid to Costa Mesa's residents.

The program goal is to provide emergency financial assistance to the most vulnerable population and helping residents remain in their homes, especially during this unprecedented pandemic.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The City Council may choose to not create a COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program. However, staff conducted a search and has identified other local government entities that have implemented or amended existing rental assistance programs to prevent homelessness in their communities during this COVID-19 crisis for those most in need and at risk of homelessness (Attachment 1 and Attachment 2).

FISCAL REVIEW:

The fiscal impacts are under review at this time. However, at this time City Council may consider an appropriation of \$250,000 from the City's General Fund to start the program, if the City Council so desires.

It is anticipated that such program could help individuals avoid homelessness thereby preventing future City costs.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed and approved this report as to form.

CONCLUSION:

During these unprecedented times with the COVID-19 crisis, it is pertinent for the City Council to consider whether to direct the City Manager and City Attorney to create an Emergency Rental Assistance Program to provide homelessness prevention funds to assist renters within the City of Costa Mesa affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Appropriate \$250,000 from the City's General Fund and/or any State and/or Federal Disaster Relief funds and create a grant program to assist low income and vulnerable renters within the City of Costa Mesa.

ALMA L. REYES

Assistant to the City Manager

CAROL MOLINA

Budget & Purchasing Manager

LORI ANN FARRELL HARRISON

City Manager

KIMBERLY HALL BARLOW

City Attorney

ATTACHMENTS: 1 [Example from City of Emeryville.](#)
2 [Example from City of Menlo Park](#)